DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 398 037 RC 020 693

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TITLE Experience and the Curriculum.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 23p.; In: Experience and the Curriculum; see RC 020 678.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Practices; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Student Evaluation; Student Responsibility; Teacher Education; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Student Engagement

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the possibilities of an experiential curriculum, and summarizes common elements and dilemmas of practice. The nature of experiential education is not so much a matter of definition as of seeing what teachers and students actually do. Mechanical models of experiential education are useful because they are simple and can serve as maps to point to elements of practice. Outstanding features of experiential education include the additive nature of experience and its ability to unlock creative powers, and the emotional aspect of student and teacher engagement. One of the strongest lessons to be learned from teacher descriptions of practice is that students must be at the center in making decisions and living with the natural consequences. It is difficult for students to choose, especially if their previous schooling experience has been to accept the choices of others. And it takes great courage for teachers to relinguish the usual mechanisms of classroom control. Successful practitioners, however, learn to live with ambiguity. Individual student responsibility, artistic expression, making personal meaning within a community context, and divergence in activity and specifics of learning all contribute to make evaluation a major problem. Grades determined by conventional testing are inimical to experiential education, and experiential educators have devised various means of sidestepping conventional evaluation. Implications for teacher education and educational research are discussed, as well as the significance of ways of knowing and the role of experiential education in social change. (Contains 16 references.) (SV)

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Chapter 16

EXPERIENCE AND THE CURRICULUM

Bert Horwood

The purpose of this chapter is to comment on the preceding chapters and to pull them together by providing a broad curriculum context. To do this, Bert points to common patterns among the essays and to unresolved and emerging issues. His reflections are grounded in the conviction, coming from many sources, that the world at the opening of the 21st century, is a world in transition, and that education must play a leading part in helping people find the abilities to cope with a bewildering and possibly destructive future.

It was one of those stairwell conversations, casual at first, then turning serious. I was struggling to give a colleague a respectable explanation of what an experiential educator did. She retorted, rather acidly, that no one taught or learned anything except through experience, and what was all the fuss about? At the time, I did not have any answer. Now, years later, it is possible to be somewhat more articulate.

Dewey (1938) made a critical distinction between experiences which were educative and miseducative. He did not mean that one would not learn from the latter, only that the learning would fail to contribute to the person's education and possibly even inhibit it. My colleague's sharp comment echoed in my head when, as part of my work as a teacher trainer and educational researcher, I watched students and teachers at work in classrooms and in the outdoors. It became easier to see what the students were experiencing and to reckon what it might contribute to their educations.

Students, I noticed, spend most of their time doing and experiencing certain things. Students mostly watch, listen, and imitate. They are highly experienced watchers, listeners, and copiers. This is what the commonest styles of instruction teach. It doesn't matter much whether students watch canoe portaging or a mathematical proof. The experience is of watching someone else do something. Usually demonstration is accompanied by verbal description. Sometimes, there is verbal description alone. Again, the subject of the words is irrelevant, whether they tell how to arrange wood for a fire or relate the story of Magna Carta. The experience is of listening to someone else expressing ideas. Imitation works the same way, although here the student is closer to performing the central act — portaging the canoe, proving a geometrical proposition, writing an essay, and so on. But their action on the material before them is not their own; it is simple mimicry. And from those experiences, students learn to be good imitators. As Bill Patterson (1995) says, "School does a good job at preparing people for more schooling" (p. 27).

It would be a mistake to underestimate learning from watching and mimicry, for these are powerful, natural ways which can be easily observed in any schoolyard in the spring when skipping ropes appear. But it is a mistake to limit learning to this model and

especially to restrict a person's tendency, having observed a desirable action, to try it for herself or himself. In the schoolyard, or on the street where most children learn to skip rope and shoot baskets, watching and listening are rapidly alternated with personal attempts at action. Furthermore, those attempts are chosen by the learner with respect to timing, intensity, and degree of difficulty. Schools do right to employ demonstration and mimicry, but there is much more to learning from experience.

My colleague was right. Students do learn what they experience, including processes and values which are of limited educational value. And I was right, too. There is a mode of teaching which puts the student in the thick of experiencing the subject matter with no, or absolutely minimal, intervention by an instructor. This mode of teaching, plus the learning that ensues, is what is meant by experiential education. It is particularly difficult and is relatively rare in publicly supported schools and colleges; it is sometimes rare even in schools which espouse the centrality of student experience in their programs.

In this essay, I will explore the possibilities and realities of an experiential curriculum as revealed by the preceding chapters. That exploration will summarize common elements and dilemmas of practice. Because this summary constitutes an account of the state of the art, there are implications for the future in teacher education and renewal, research in education, and the social changes in which we find ourselves. These implications will also be examined.

Common Practices

Models of Experiential Education

A much better answer for my colleague, though not at all suited to casual conversation, is the contents of this book. The nature of experiential education is not so much a matter of definition as a matter of seeing what teachers and students actually do. There are several, well-documented models of experiential education. These have in common a mechanistic or mechanical ideology, namely that a complex reality can best be expressed as a simplified mechanical

model, usually as a flow chart. The chapters by Tom Herbert and Rogene McKiernan refer to these. Such mechanical models (mechanical, because they treat the teaching-learning axis as though it was a machine) are useful because they are simple, and they gain credence to the extent that they serve as maps which point to features visible in the descriptions of practice by other teachers.

Mechanical models are popular for a more important reason. They reflect the scientific world view which has driven thought in most of the West for the past three hundred years. Most of us are accustomed to this view of the world and have been trained to believe it. However, there are cracks appearing in the dominance of that world view. Alternative, and ancient, ways of knowing and understanding are being rediscovered and reclaimed. We are learning that there is a truth which lies between the facts (Perkins, 1983). Chapters like that of Rena Upitis and David Jardine illustrate this holistic, integrated view. The fact that Jiddu Krishnamurti could be held up as a hero in this field (Ed Raiola's chapter) is a sure sign that values are in transition.

This integrative tendency, the desire to be inclusive, the recognition that experience is more additive than analytic, or isolating, is a fact that rings throughout this entire collection. Gail Simmons demonstrates the creative and imaginative power available when students combine their reading of literature with related action in the world. Gary rasberry's chapter reveals the same unlocking of potent forces of imagination, only in a more directed context. Bill Patterson and Gary Shultz display the gains that come from increased exchange between schools and communities. Rick Gordon and Thomas Julius show that the creative power of experience is independent of grade level. Tom Smith's abused adolescents respond best to a multi-sided program in which teachers, foster parents, and therapists participate in each other's work.

The special ingredient here (I nearly wrote the "magic ingredient") is emotion. The emotional aspect of engagement is clear in the account of Karne Kozolanka, and reaches its fullest expression in David Jardine's chapter. Students are cited in some chapters (e.g., Shultz, Upitis, Kozolanka, and McKiernan) and there is always emotional content present. The lesson from all these accounts is that experiential education, at its best, engages the

emotions, intellects, and bodies of both teachers and students. Here, the language is letting me down. The words "emotions," "minds," and "bodies" imply a kind of internal taxonomy that subdivides a human being into discrete entities. That's not what I deduce from reading these chapters together. What I'm trying to say is that the teachers and learners are engaged all over. The curriculum becomes lived experience, and lived experience is absorbed into the curriculum. Exactly as Whitehead (1929) would have it.

Students at the Centre

While the nature of educational engagement may be in transition, there is still the practical, everyday, down-to-earth business of going to work and spending time with one's students. Teachers find value in sharing highly specific procedures for accomplishing the ends of experiential education. They are acting like good cooks for whom, no matter what theories of nutrition and aesthetics they hold, specific recipes have a value which no amount of general principles can replace. In this respect, chapters like those by Deborah Millan and Tom Herbert provide examples.

One of the strongest lessons in these chapters is that students are at the centre in making decisions and living with the natural consequences. There is a hard, double-edge in this aspect: hard, because it is difficult for students to choose. It is especially difficult for students to choose if their previous experience in schooling has been to accept the choices of others. As evidence, note the difficulties described by Rena Upitis, Rick Gordon, and Rogene McKiernan when adult students are required to make independent decisions. Double-edged because, while one edge is challenging for the student, the other edge is troubling for the teacher. What if the students, as is highly likely, do not choose wisely? These writers reveal the great courage it takes for teachers to deliberately abandon their authoritative and controlling ways. Teachers, too, must live with the natural consequences of students' choices. In most cases, the results are wonderful. But there are nerve-wracking moments of tension and uncertainty. Uncertainty, diversity, irregularity, novelty, and other unpredictables are the most difficult

consequences of this aspect of experiential education. Successful practitioners learn to live with ambiguity.

The centrality of students and learning from experience does not relieve teachers of the responsibilities that go with being adult professionals. Students must be kept emotionally and physically safe. Somehow, mandated curriculum content must be honoured in ways that will not cheat the students. Teachers have critical roles to set experiences within limits that make sense. In this respect, the sequence of instructional events is shown by these writers to be crucial to success. Rogene McKiernan gives the most vivid account of this in canoe instruction and Deborah Millan discusses the significance of the placement of field trips in the classroom instructional sequence. The lesson is that the earlier the experience, the more convincing is the message to students that they are to take responsibility for making sense out of it. If the sense has previously been delivered by vicarious experience (such as watching a paddling demonstration, or reading about the field trip site before visiting it), learning out of the experience has been more or less preempted.

It is no accident that the essays in this book say virtually nothing about the desirability of exhaustive sets of curriculum resource materials. These teacher voices are different from many in that they do not cry out for more packages of materials, media, or software. Similarly, the work described is remarkably free from the influence of commercial and corporate agendas which infiltrate the flood of resource material entering schools. The reason for this impressive freedom is closely related to putting students at the centre of the educational enterprise. Teachers who conduct their classes experientially do need libraries and community resources, but student decision making obviates the need for pre-digested and pre-planned materials. The concept of curriculum is broadened beyond subject-content details to include critical issues of being human, like that of gender identity as described by Karne Kozolanka.

Students in experientially oriented classes have placed on them a burden to make meaning out of their current (and past) experiences. James Raffan (1993) has described that kind of learning as making personal meaning. He claims it as a major consequence of out-of-school experience that is set in a deliberative curriculum context. My colleague, of the stairwell conversation, was quite right in her

assertion that everyone learns something from experience. For some students, their experience of school is construed into a personal conviction that school is not a good place for them to be, that books and teachers and writing waste time. The chapters in this book all show the central characteristic of experiential education, namely, that participants, and instructors, too, are expected to make personal meaning. It is important to distinguish between personal meaning and private meaning because, in much of the practice described here, personal meaning is often expected to be made public, at least in part. Students in the highly individualized service-learning program described by Lyn Shulha and Jeff Piker, for example, are nevertheless expected to declare their learning. Thomas Julius's Grade Three students are expected to choose samples of their work to present to their families. There is a social context that cannot be ignored.

Rena Upitis made the observation that when students are required to choose an activity, even in a mathematics education class, there is a tendency to pick one which is an art or a craft, rather than, say, learning a new branch of mathematics. This observation is supported by the kinds of choices made by Gail Simmons's high school English students and the profound learning about gender, work, and job satisfaction described by Karne Kozolanka. In a similar way, it is no accident that David Jardine found the most potent expression of his ideas in the hard particulars of poetry. The arts and crafts are the converging roads which connect all learning. Thus, the integrative, whole-making tendency of experiential education is best expressed in the arts. The frequency with which students choose such modes of expression may also be related to the paucity of their opportunities to be expressive in conventional academic prose.

Evaluation

Individual student responsibility, artistic expression, making personal meaning within a community context, and divergence in activity and specifics of learning all contribute to make evaluation a major problem. The problem is even greater when one considers the unique treatment given to student failure found in experience-rich

settings. Events that go wrong, which might be rated as failures in another school's context, are treated as valuable occasions for learning. In the stories from Expeditionary Learning, Tom Herbert's practice, portfolios, and projects, we see the constructive, creative, and educative treatment of error which in other settings might result in a student's being marked down. Reframing error from being something shameful and discreditable into a natural occasion for further exploration is a wonderful feature of those practices which we call "experiential."

By evaluation, I mean that peculiarly "schoolish" process of issuing a letter grade or number to assign value to a student's learning. Evaluating a school program is equally problematic, as Lyn Shulha and Jeff Piker show, but for clarity I'll treat it as a separate issue. There are four devices described by our authors. One of them is to use portfolios as a combined teaching and evaluation tool. Another is to dismiss grading as a discriminatory tool and, at the same time, express high confidence in the students by giving them, in advance of the course, a uniform and high grade. A third device has students select the weighting of grades among their various courses, which weighting will reflect the student's interest and commitment to parts of the program. Things like the public celebration after a *History Comes Alive* unit constitute informal valuing of learning which parallels the more formal school system grades. Despite these pragmatic, creative, and valuable methods, they are still essentially stunts being played on the pervasive and oppressive reliance on grades.

Experiential teachers have yet to come to grips with this central issue. Grades or marks determined by conventional testing and examination are inimical to experiential education. It is not possible, using these devices, to discover what each individual student has learned from their school experiences. Neither is it possible to discover what collective or communal learning there may have been. It follows that it is equally impossible to assign a numerical value, whether absolute or comparative, to learning that can never be discovered. This truth is very hard to deliver in a culture which grades eggs, wheat, and beef, and evaluates to the finest degree the performance of all new model cars. The delightful thing about the

writers in this book is that they have found ways, in various degrees of subversion, to live with the problem.

It is instructive to examine a form of report developed by Kurt Hahn (Ewald, 1977, p. 31) for use in his schools. Hahn did not shy away from the evaluative process, but he did put it into the broad framework of human development which he wished his schools to promote. I do not urge that teachers use this form; rather, it is an example of putting the standards of achievement of school subjects into the context of the rest of a student's life. The particular items being assessed also reveal how much any evaluation system, when it is honest, reflects the value system of the evaluator.

Esprit de corps

Sense of justice

Ability to state facts precisely

Ability to follow what she(he) believes to be the right course in the face of:

- discomforts
- dangers
- hardships
- mockery
- skepticism
- impulses of the moment

Ability to plan

Imagination

Ability to organize her(his) own work and work with younger students.

Degree of concentration when the task interests her(him)

- And when it does not

Conscientiousness in everyday work and in special assignments

Manners

Manual dexterity

Standard reached in school subjects

Practical work, crafts, etc.

Arts (music, drawing, theatre)

Physical exercise, reaction time, endurance . . .

Implications for Teacher Education and Research

Given that there is an established body of practice, albeit divergent and only fuzzily defined, which can be termed "experiential education," what are the implications it has for professional training and for research in education? The following sections explore these questions.

Teacher Education

One of the most nagging questions arising from reading teachers' stories of their work is, "How did they learn to do that?" My own experience as a student teacher, and later as a teacher educator, convinced me that there was very little, if any, direct training, study, or practice of experiential methods in the education of most teachers. Some exceptional programs do exist, but they are small and happen not to be the programs in which most of the authors in this book were trained. The question persists: Where and how do we learn to teach in this way, a way which was once identified to me by a student as a "strange manner of teaching?"

One answer is that when a teacher is dissatisfied with her work, and determined to make changes, inventiveness and creativity drive the search for greater satisfaction. A classic account of this motive is found in Wigginton's (1986) story of the origins of the Foxfire program. Equally vivid is Gail Simmons's discovery of experiential teaching out of frustration with the lifelessness of her geography lessons, and Rogene McKiernan's stimulation from working with Expeditionary Learning. In Gail's case, it is especially significant that she made the discovery while teaching a subject in which she was not particularly expert. I interpret this as further evidence that

expertise is overrated and may even inhibit the search for solutions. This pattern of thoughtful reflection and search stimulated by dissatisfaction is evidenced in several other chapters; examples are those by Tom Herbert, Ed Raiola, and Lyn Shulha and Jeff Piker. In short, by reflecting upon the experiences of practice, especially when there is attention to the dissatisfying aspects, teachers learn to practice experientially by themselves.

Another possible answer lies in experiential practice, often unsung and unlabelled as such, at any stage of a person's learning life. There are indications in the work of Rena Upitis, Rick Gordon, and David Jardine that their students may well teach in a different manner than they would have done if they had not encountered portfolios, projects, or math facts on a teddy bear's tummy. In the same way, I wonder what sort of teaching practice will be found among Thomas Julius's Grade Three students when they re-enter schools as teachers? Will the graduates of Expeditionary Learning programs incorporate the principles into their practice, should they become teachers? Schools of Education are not the only possible place for discovering the role of experience in teaching. The point is that teachers may well teach mostly in the ways in which they themselves were taught most effectively and pleasantly. Experiential teaching may be infectious: caught more easily than taught. And the place of infection need not be a school. As speculation, I offer the proposal that some of the best experiential teachers learned their craft as much on the family farm, at summer camp, or in the workplace, as in school.

This book is a strong case for the roles of reflection and narrative in bringing experiential methods into greater awareness. Confidence is also increased through professional internal and external dialogue. One is not alone in these "screwy things," as Keith King calls them. Teachers telling their stories to one another is an important part of their own learning from the lived experiences of teaching. It is a sort of meta-experiential education. It is quite right that the teachers writing in this book have not spared themselves from the demands for thoughtful reflection and meaning making which they placed on their students.

Research in Education

There is a gap between the academic and commercial research community and the community of teachers. Few teachers read research reports and fewer still use them to guide practice. There are several possible reasons. One is that the results of research are published in relatively inaccessible forms. Another is that the results are not seen to be relevant to the concerns of practice. A third is that research is regarded as "theoretical," which must somehow always be transferred into "practice." One of the things that emerges clearly in this book is that teachers do not first learn theory and then put it into practice. The reality here is that there is continual dialectic between practice and theory. The former, when considered reflectively, leads to the emergence of the latter, which, being relevant, informs changes in practice. And so on.

Fortunately, there are two trends apparent in this book that suggest the gap may be narrowing. One of those trends is to conceive of research more broadly than has been done in the past. Donald Schön (1983) provides a lovely example when he assigns status as a researcher to any professional who is struggling to redefine and reframe the dilemmas and puzzles of practice. The conversation of Rick Gordon and Thomas Julius, and Ed Raiola's search for models and guides, are examples. So is Bill Patterson's reframing of community members as partners of the school. The concept of research has also been broadened to include qualitative investigations alongside the previously dominant, quantitative experimental studies. Thus, Karne Kozolanka's description of gender as a factor in the education of students on a building site counts as a legitimate and useful way of learning new things about education. This is not to disparage quantitative research as a less legitimate way of discovery.

The second trend is the recognition that narrative constitutes a powerful research tool (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). The stories of practice reconsidered, of success and failure, of hopes and fears, make practice malleable and transparent. Malleability is important because it attacks the notion that teachers boringly do the same thing over and over again, ad nauseam. Malleability shows that, while there is enough form and structure for consistency, there is

also the ability to flow, to be plastic, to take another shape. Transparency is critical if the discovery made by one teacher about practice is to be learned by another teacher. Rogene McKiernan describes the struggles of one group of teachers (Outward Bound instructors) to make their work as expedition leaders transparent to the school teachers who were Outward Bound students. The heart of a teacher's work, like any artistry, is often concealed to observers. Narrative is a way to reveal that which has, up till now, been the hidden secrets of practice.

There are further questions which emerge from these narratives of practice. One is to better understand the process of reflection and invention which enables teachers to be innovators. Another is to learn more about the sources of teacher energy and satisfaction. A book like this one does not attract writing from teachers who are tired, disenchanted, frustrated, and isolated. The ways of teacher renewal and refreshment are poorly understood. Much of the work described in these pages cries out for follow-up. A common reaction of reviewers of the manuscripts was to wish that they could know what happened next. When the community becomes more a part of the curriculum, what are the long-term effects on students? How will the young teachers who considered the deeper meaning of mathematics and bears, or who grapple with the thought of Krishnamurti, teach in their own classrooms? What became of the abused teenagers who passed through their powerful program with Tom Smith? What difference does the absence of service learning from a teacher education program make after ten years? Longitudinal investigations are unpopular in a society that seeks instant gratification and quick fixes, and consequently, we know very little about how today's exciting experiential program contributes to the rest of a student's life.

Major consideration needs to be given to overhauling the practices of student evaluation. Stories of practice show that conventional patterns of evaluation and grading are irrelevant and inimical to experiential education. There is much creative, and largely secret, sidestepping of institutional evaluative demands as a response of teachers determined to do their best with their students, regardless. There is a grave need for researchers and teachers to

an axis of tension between individual learning and communal learning. In the following sections, I will consider each of these three topics in the light of the essays in this book.

Ways of Knowing

The old Peoples had ways of knowing that became largely lost from the 17th century onward. Our times are now dominated by the way of knowing which characterizes modern science. The material benefits, if such they are, that flow from knowledge obtained by the methods and attitudes of science are so great that scientific knowledge has come to dominate all knowing. The price we pay for this kind of knowledge is alienation from the world and from ourselves. Berman (1981) calls this a loss of enchantment. A number of factors are at work to erode the dominance of science as the best of all ways of knowing. The upshot of these is that, in some quarters, objectivity is valued less than it used to be. Those things that can be numbered are not valued more highly than those things that can not. Knowledge which has emotional and spiritual content is coming to be recognized as legitimate. There are forces at work which will restore enchantment in human relations with the rest of the world.

One of the great gifts of science was print. The emergence of print and literacy gave learning via reading a primacy over learning via other routes, for example, oral accounts, dreams, or direct experience. To sustain the scientific way of knowing, to enhance the necessary personal detachment from the objects of study, learning from print became more important than learning from the world itself. In this way emerged a curriculum expressed in textbooks rather than in the lived experiences of students.

When lived experience enters the curriculum, as illustrated by this book, the value of the scientific way of knowing, with all its entailments, is not denied. Rather, it is put into a larger context of being human. The school can become more than a factory where teachers are seen as tools and students as products. Explanations couched in terms of machines and reason alone become enlarged by the inclusion of soul and emotion. The dominant education can become more inclusive and more easily compatible with traditional cultural knowledge, such as that possessed by aboriginal and tribal

people. For example, the Mohawks of Ahkwesahsne have developed a science and mathematics curriculum which is grounded in the culture and tradition of the Longhouse people (Wendt, 1995). Arthur Solomon, Ojibwa Elder and spiritual teacher, writes:

> We propose to surround our children with a total educational environment whereby the teachers and the parents and the elders provide an education that is fashioned not only by those who teach but also by the ones who learn. We will again become each other's teachers as it always was. (Solomon, 1990, p. 99)

As the accepted ways of knowing expand, the structure of research expands and, consequently, there is hope for a sound body of inquiry to support experience in the curriculum. As the nature of knowledge takes on new structures, the context for schools, curriculum, and the training of teachers changes.

Should Curriculum Lead or Follow?

Curriculum can have two kinds of influence on social structures. It can be conservative, working to maintain and transmit social and cultural values and norms from one generation to the next, or it can be transformative, contributing to change in society. Given that both directions coexist, curriculum is not likely to be able to bring about radical change. Indeed it is unlikely, in my view, that schools can take the lead in promoting change unless parallel change is already beginning in other sectors of the culture.

The Association for Experiential Education (1995) has adopted "positive social change" as part of its vision statement, although it is not stated what "positive" means. I interpret the vision statement to mean that the experiential educators who are part of that Association wish to emphasize the transformative power of curriculum. The essays in this book support that wish by showing how it can be done, why it works, and some of the pitfalls along the way. The transformative perspective is not practised to the exclusion of the more normal conservative one. Almost all of the stories in this book come from school and college teachers who are embedded in conventional institutions with essentially conservative perspectives.

The transformative aspect of curriculum is present, and may even be nurtured, in conventional settings. This is both a hopeful and an uncomfortable state of affairs.

The direction of change is not clear. At first glance, it seems strange that the Association for Experiential Education would espouse social change and not clearly specify the direction. But perhaps this turns out to be the path of wisdom. It is clear that social values are in transition, that there is conflict among a clamour of voices. It may be best not to be specific when there are many possible choices. It may be better to broadcast many varieties of seeds and allow those forces over which we have no control to sort out the survivors. To be fair, the Association's vision statement does refer to justice and compassion as desirable elements of the world. But it remains to be seen how these qualities will be understood in changing times.

Planting seeds is exactly what placing experience in the curriculum does. Experience in the curriculum makes demands on the young (and anyone who wishes to learn) to pay attention to the particulars of life and construct meaning from them. It demands that the meanings fit each person's frame of reference, including both existing transmitted cultural structures and newly emerging ones. It demands that meaning and understanding change as new experiences and new times come along. Such a curriculum provides tools of awareness, thought, and feeling which arise out of the most useful of traditions and the most promising of emergent novelties. It seems to me that a person educated in this way could hardly be better prepared for an uncertain, unpredictable future.

The Individual in Community

Experiential education tends to place emphasis on individual growth, development, and learning. Much experiential education is done in small groups with distinct communal elements, yet, at the end, individual gains are what count. Even the most intensely focused learning communities are dismantled when the course is over. In fact, groups in experiential education are very short-lived. This term's classmates are not the same as next term's classmates. Consequently, although experiences may be shared and interpreted

on a group basis, individual right to idiosyncratic interpretation and individual responsibility for learning are the abiding values. Individuals are the atoms of the dominant Western culture — mobile, transferable, and even interchangeable.

Part of the change that is swirling about the arrival of the 21st century is the recognition of indigenous knowledge, the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding residual in aboriginal peoples all over the world. Indigenous knowledge is one of the factors affecting the climate of change in ways of knowing and possible new directions for education. I raise it here, because it sheds light on the puzzling tension between individual and communal knowledge. Indigenous people have a way of placing the individual much more firmly in community than is done in dominant industrialized societies. There are many extremes in tribal variations, but a general characteristic is that an individual's prowess and accomplishment is for and of the community. Knowledge is communal property, after a fashion. One of the powerful ways of expressing this relationship is through service (Hall, 1991).

The practice of experiential education, as exemplified in this book, does not have this kind of emphasis on community. There are traces of its presence, as in Bill Patterson's work and in Rena Upitis's observation that family and friends were important elements in her students' struggles with their independent projects. At this stage in its development, the practice of experiential education contains only rudiments of learning as a communal enterprise. By contrast, the corporate sector may be better developed, in this respect. Corporations are encouraging and training their employees to think in terms of community and to understand that phenomenon called "corporate learning." This is the ultimate stage in the personification of corporations. It is ironic that while some branches of experiential education are active in corporate training, the curriculum in many schools and colleges has not yet embraced experiential methods.

Conclusion

The authors of this book demonstrate the diversity of views and practice which contributes to experiential education. The field is not clearly bounded, nor is it highly developed. All the same, there are clear common elements of practice and there are skilled practitioners. It has been recognized that the ablest practitioners are not necessarily the most articulate. It has also been recognized that committing to action with students is so consuming that there is little energy left for writing. Nevertheless, according to Page (1990), if we are not to join the decline of the progressive movement, it is critically important that teachers themselves make thoughtful reports about their practice.

Thoughtful teachers going public with their interpretations of experience in the curriculum have an impact on teacher education and research. These accounts reveal teachers reflecting and learning, as professionals should do. By going public, the gritty particulars of practice as well as the ideological and curriculum contexts are made available for other teachers and would-be teachers. There are opportunities to discuss, debate, appreciate, and even disapprove within school communities. Numerous questions and issues calling for research are exposed. Giving voice to that which has previously been largely silent is a very creditable activity.

O'Brien (1994) predicts, darkly, that during the 21st century "the advanced world may well be like, and feel like, a closed and guarded palace, in a city gripped by the plague" (p. 141). He powerfully documents that prediction by showing the erosion of Enlightenment values such as democracy, the rule of law, and freedom of expression. Experience in the curriculum is a grand antidote for such a grim image. Not because experiential education can stop the plague or guard the palace, but rather, it can prepare ordinary people to make sense of their lives whatever the circumstances. Indeed, in O'Brien's terms, an experiential curriculum might even be construed as part of the plague, and that would be an appropriate construction since the plague is where the action is. Survival in a changing world means more than hanging on. It also means participating in the changes. Using experience to discover the immanent

possibilities in the world is a way to avoid being locked up in the guarded palace.

No one has said that any part of it is easy.

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